

ME AND YOU

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"It happened in those days and Moshe grew up, and he went out to his brothers and he saw their sufferings." [Shemot 2,11]

Although Moshe Rabenu grew up as a prince in the palace of the Pharaoh, he learned from his mother that he was not an Egyptian but instead, he was a Jew. He felt a need to go out of his secure, comfortable surroundings in order to view the plight of his brethren. The verse simply states that he saw their suffering but Rashi reveals the depth of his emotional attachment to the slaves that he saw struggling in the mud. "He put his eyes and his heart" into it. Our sages teach this is a trait called "noseh b'ohl im habero" -- "carrying the load along with your friend." It is in the merit of Moshe's excellence in this trait that earned him the position as Savior of his people and gave us the leader who not only freed us from bondage but also brought us the Torah and led us to the boundaries of the Promised Land.

Rav Haim Friedlander zt'l says people are naturally "self" oriented. Even when people do acts of kindness they may be motivated by selfishness. Someone who is uncomfortable seeing pain or suffering might help others thinking they are acting in a "giving" manner when they are actually subconsciously removing from sight that which bothers them. The act may benefit the one in need, but the motivation comes from the id --the "givers" selfish drives.

In 1895 there was a fire that destroyed many homes in the city of Brisk. The great leader of the Jewish community, Rav Haim Soloveitchik zt'l, tirelessly worked day and night to restore the dwellings of all those families who had lost their homes in the blaze. He also refused to go home to bed, but rather slept on the floor of the synagogue until every family had a place to live. He did not merely know about their plight and he did not merely help them out of their troubles -- he FELT their pain and could not rest until their suffering was relieved. He felt that they were really part of him.

Another story is told about the Hafetz Haim zt'l who cried and prayed constantly during World War 1 because he knew how much his brethren were suffering all over Europe. Many were subjected to pogroms, others were drafted into battle for the countries in which they lived and others lost their homes in the changing boundaries of Europe's map. One night his wife woke up and found that he was not in his bed. She found him sleeping on a wooden bench with his head resting on his hands. "Yisrael Meir", she said, "Why aren't you sleeping in your bed? Where is your pillow?"

"How can I sleep in a bed," he replied, "When so many of our people are suffering the ravages of war?"

He too did not hear about the troubles of another without FEELING as if the problem was his own.

Today, we are aware of a lot of Jewish suffering around the globe. We are all hungry for news from the battleground in Eretz Yisrael. But there are many Jews who are falling prey to assimilation even here in the United States. France has been showing an increase in Anti-Semitic crimes. There are still Jewish communities in Muslim countries and in the Former Soviet Union. Many of our people have financial problems, while others cannot find a mate. Some who are married have no children and others who have children fall ill to horrible diseases. What does Hashem want? Perhaps He wants us to be noseh b'ohl im habero --to help in carrying the load -- by praying, giving charity and assistance to those in need. But most importantly, to feel that another Jew's problem is my own. His or her problem hurts me like my difficulties. It was this attitude that made Moshe the leader of our salvation from Egypt and perhaps if we can truly evoke that unity in our people today, Hashem will bring the final redemption with the coming of Mashiah speedily and in our days. Amen.

QUESTION FROM THE PARASHA

When Moshe went before the Pharaoh in order to free the slaves he did not ask the wicked monarch to release the Jewish people from their bondage. He merely requested "We will go 3 days journey into the desert and bring sacrifices to our Lord." If Hashem's intention was to free the Jewish people from Egypt forever, why didn't He instruct Moshe to ask Pharaoh "Let my people go free --forever"?

Rabenu Yehudah Moshe Fataya zt'l, in his book Minhat Yehuda explains: When Hashem predicted to Abraham Abinu that his children would serve as slaves in a strange land and suffer at the hands of their host nation -He did not include the extreme cruelty of the Egyptians as part of the decree - especially the drowning of all male children in the Nile river. G-d wanted to meet out a just punishment -- middah k'neged middah - to the Egyptians whereby He would drown the Egyptian males. By first promising to return after 3 days and then continuing to travel on escape path away from Egypt, the Jews prompted the chase that eventually led to the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea - the just punishment came about as a result of the "trick" of the 3 day request.

DID YOU KNOW THAT On Shabbat it is forbidden to separate or sort out 2 kinds of articles, which are mixed together. This process of separation is called "Borer". Selection is permitted if 3 conditions are met (which demonstrate that the separating is done in the course of normal use of the article being selected).

- 1) What one wishes to use is being separated from one that one does not wish to use (i.e. the good is taken and the "bad" is left behind.)
- 2) The separation is done by hand and not by a utensil designed to separate the articles in question.
- 3) What is being separated is intended for immediate use and not for use at some future time.

[Source, Shemirath Shabbath based on Shulhan Arukh, O'H, Siman 319]

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